

Message Text

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ACTION EA-13

INFO OCT-01 SS-14 ADP-00 NSC-10 NSCE-00 INR-09 CIAE-00

NSAE-00 DODE-00 PM-03 L-02 IO-03 EUR-10 DPW-01 PRS-01

SSO-00 RSR-01 RSC-01 /069 W
----- 028365

P R 251103 Z APR 73

FM AMEMBASSY SAIGON

TO SECSTATE WASHDC PRIORITY 736

INFO USDEL JEC PARIS

AMCONSUL BIEN HOA

AMCONSUL CAN THO

AMCONSUL DANANG

AMCONSUL NHA TRANG

S E C R E T SAIGON 7188

LIMDIS

EO 11652: GDS

TAGS: MOPS MILI VS

SUBJ: CONGEN NHA TRANG REPORT ON POSSIBLE NVA/ VC ATTEMPTS AT
" ACCOMODATION" IN WESTERN PLEIKU PROVINCE AND GVN RESPONSE

THE FOLLOWING AMCONSUL NHA TRANG MESSAGE 410 REPEATED FOR
YOUR ACTION/ INFO WITH ADDED AMEMBASSY SAIGON COMMENT QUOTE

S E C R E T NHA TRANG 0410

E. O. 11652: GDS

TAGS: MOPS MILI VS

SUBJECT: POSSIBLE NVA/ VC ATTEMPTS AT ACCOMMODATION IN WESTERN
PLEIKU

PROVINCE AND GVN PLANS IN THE AREA

LIMDIS

REF: A. NHA TRANG A-3

B. NHA TRANG A-12

C. SAIGON 6434, APRIL 16 SIT REP

1. SUMMARY: THANH AN DISTRICT IN PLEIKU PROVINCE HAS BEEN SCENE
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OF SPORADIC FIGHTING EVER SINCE CEASE- FIRE. EARLY ENEMY ATTEMPTS TO WORK OUT DIVISION OF TERRITORY IN THE AREA CAME TO NOUGHT WHEN GVN CUT OFF CONTACTS. NOW PRG AT DUC CO HAS APPARENTLY SIGNALLED THROUGH EAST EUROPEAN ICCS DELEGATES ITS DESIRE TO TRY AGAIN. HOWEVER, MR 2 COMMANDER APPARENTLY WANTS TO MAINTAIN MILITARY PRESSURE IN THE AREA AND WILL REPORTEDLY CARRY OUT TROOP SHIFT IN ORDER TO DO SO. EMBASSY' S INSTRUCTIONS REQUESTED WITH REGARD TO ANY US ROLE IN ICCS- GVN CONTACTS. END SUMMARY.

2. ONE OF FEW AREAS IN MR 2 THAT HAS SEEN REGULAR MILITARY ACTION SINCE EARLY MARCH IS ALONG HIGHWAY 19, WEST OF HIGHWAY 14 TOWARD ENEMY STRONGHOLD AT DUC CO IN WESTERN PLEIKU PROVINCE. MOST OF THE FIGHTING HAS BEEN ON CENTRAL PORTION OF THIS STRETCH, EAST OF THANH GIAO VILLAGE, HELD BY ENEMY, AND NEAR ARVN RANGER BASE IN VICINITY OF PLEI YIT. FEB- MARCH DEVELOPMENTS IN AREA ARE TREATED IN REFERENCED AIRGRAMS.

3. SEVERAL SOURCES IN THANH AN DISTRICT HAVE TOLD PLEIKU POLOFF THEY BELIEVE ENEMY SHELLINGS OF DISTRICT HQ AND OTHER TARGETS THROUGHOUT MARCH AND CULMINATING IN HEAVY MORTAR ATTACKS ON 62 ND RANGER BATTALION COMMAND POST APRIL 1 AND 3 WERE ESSENTIALLY IN RESPONSE TO AGGRESSIVE PATROLLING BY RANGERS. INDEED, MR 2 COMMANDER, MAJ. GEN. NGUYEN VAN TOAN, TOLD PLEIKU SENIOR ARRO REPRESENTATIVE ON APRIL 12 THAT HE HAD ORDERED RANGERS TO MAINTAIN PRESSURE ON ENEMY IN THIS AREA. TOAN CONFIRMED TO ME ON APRIL 4, JUST AFTER LAST HEAVY ABF, THAT THIS WAS HIS STRATEGY.

4. HOWEVER, AREA HAS BEEN UNUSUALLY QUIET SINCE APRIL 5. PLEIKU POLOFF REPORTS THAT RANGER BATTALION, AFTER RETREATING TO THE EAST AND RE- ESTABLISHING ITS HQ, CONDUCTED NO NEW OPERATIONS FROM APRIL 5 THROUGH AT LEAST APRIL 8 (DATE OF HIS MOST RECENT VISIT). SIMULTAREOUSLY, ENEMY SHELLINGS OF GVN POSITIONS IN THE AREA DROPPED OFF. A POSSIBLE CONCLUSION IS THAT NVA/ VC MAY HAVE HALTED THEIR ABF' S BECAUSE AGGRESSIVE ACTION BY GVN ENDED FIRST.

5. PRG MEANWHILE STILL APPEARS INTERESTED IN SOME KIND OF TERRITORIAL ACCOMMODATION IN THE AREA, PRESUMABLY ONE THAT WOULD ACKNOWLEDGE THEIR CONTROL OF TERRITORY AT LEAST AS FAR EAST AS THANH GIAO VILLAGE AND RULE OUT ANY GVN INCURSIONS CLOSER TO DUC CO. ICCS POLDEL WHO SPENT MONTH OF MARCH AT DUC CO TOLD PLEIKU POLOFF THAT PRG THERE ASKED POLDEL (CIRCA MARCH 15) TO SET UP
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PRG- GVN DISCUSSION OF DEMARCATION LINE THROUGH ICCS CHANNELS. THIS REQUEST WAS FORWARDED TO PLEIKU, BUT POLDEL SAID HE HAD HEARD OF

NO RESPONSE.

6. ALSO, A MR. RYPKA OF SAIGON HUNGDEL MET PLEIKU POLOFF APRIL 7. MEETING HAD BEEN REQUESTED TWO DAYS EARLIER BY REGION 3 HUNGDEL. RYPKA, WHO WAS ACCOMPANYING HIS AMBASSADOR AND SENIOR MIL REP, SAID HE HAD SPENT SIX HOURS WITH PRG DELEGATION IN DUC CO PREVIOUS DAY. AFTER SOME PROBING ABOUT POLOFF'S ROLE AND EXTENT OF HIS INFLUENCE WITH LOCAL GVN OFFICIALS, RYPKA RATHER BLUNTLY SAID HE HAD COME AWAY FROM DUC CO WITH OVERWHELMING IMPRESSION THAT PRG WANTED TO TERMINATE HOSTILITIES IN THE AREA AND ESTABLISH A DIALOGUE WITH THE GVN BUT COULD NOT FIND A RESPONSIVE PARTY AT THE OTHER END. WITHOUT MAKING DIRECT REQUEST, RYPKA THEN HINTED AT A US ROLE IN MAKING THESE ARRANGEMENTS.

7. MEANWHILE, ARVN 45 TH REGT, 23 RD DIVISION, WHICH HAD BEEN CONDUCTING SMALL- SCALE OPERATIONS IN AREA IMMEDIATELY WEST OF PLEIKU CITY, WAS MOVED SOUTH WITHIN LAST FEW DAYS TO AUGMENT RANGERS IN PLEI YIT AREA. 45 TH REGT REPORTEDLY HAS AS ITS OBJECTIVE THE RECOVERY OF THANH GIAO VILLAGE. TOAN DID NOT MENTION THIS REDEPLOYMENT TO ME WHEN I LAST SAW HIM APRIL 14 (IN PRESENCE OF COLUMNIST ROBERT NOVAK), BUT HE MADE CLEAR THAN THANH AN DISTRICT WAS ONE OF HIS MAJOR WORRIES. SUCH WORRIES ARE JUSTIFIED, OF COURSE, BY THE MAJOR ENEMY BUILD- UP IN AND AROUND DUC CO-- THE " INVASION," SUPPOSEDLY OF " BULLDOZERS," ACKNOWLEDGED EVEN BY A POLISH INTERPRETER (REFC).

8. COMMENT: WE MUST ASSUME THAT THE ENEMY'S INTEREST IN TERRITORIAL ACCOMMODATION IN THANH AN DISTRICT IS ENTIRELY SELF- SERVING; HE WANTS IMMUNITY WHILE HE CONTINUES HIS BUILD- UP, AND HE WOULD LIKE TO SEE THE GVN SET PRECEDENT BY IN EFFECT RENOUNCING ANY CLAIM TO LAND WEST OF SOME A S- YET UNSPECIFIED POINT ON QL-19. FOR ITS PART THE GVN IS PROPERLY CONCERNED BY AN OFFENSIVE THREAT IT CANNOT (BECAUSE OF THE AGREEMENT) TRY TO PRE- EMPT IN CUSTOMARY FASHION, BUT IT ALSO APPEARS UNDULY SKITTISH ABOUT ENTERING INTO THE KIND OF DISCUSSION CONTEMPLATED IN ARTICLE 4 OF THE JMC PROTOCOL.

9. SINCE RYPKA DEPARTED PLEIKU IMMEDIATELY AFTER CONVERSATION WITH POLOFF AND SINCE POLDEL MENTIONED PARA 5 WAS APPARENTLY ON
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